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Message Text

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70
ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-10 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-14 USIA-04 AID-05 COME-00 EB-03 FRB-01 TRSE-00

XMB-01 OPIC-02 CIEP-01 LAB-01 SIL-01 OMB-01 NIC-01

DRC-01 /076 W
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R 081749Z OCT 74
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2189
INFO AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BE
SUBJECT: TINDEMANS EXECUTES MINOR RESHUFFLE AFTER ATTEMPT
TO ENLARGE COALITION FAILS

REF: BRUSSELS 7266

1. SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 4 PM TINDEMANS EXECUTED MINOR CABINET RESHUFFLE REPLACING MIN CULTURAL AFFAIRS (FRANCOPHONE) WITH HENRI FRANCOIS VAN AAL, A SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (PSC), AND ADDING TWO SECSTATES (SUB-CABINET OFFICERS) FOR BRUSSELS AS REQUIRED BY AUGUST 1 REGIONALIZATION LAW.RESHUFFLE CAME AFTER TINDEMANS FAILED TO ENLARGE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY BY ADDING ONE OR MORE OPPOSITION PARTIES. PRESS GENERALLY APPLAUDS TINDEMANS FOR FAIRLY ELEGANT SOLUTION OF DIFFICULT PROBLEM POSED BY COMPLI-CATED BELGIAN DOMESTIC POLITICS. HOWEVER, TINDEMANS STILL DOES NOT HAVE SOLID MAJORITY GOVERNMENT. HE STILL UNDER PRESSURE FROM FRANCOPHONE REGIONAL INTERESTS WITHIN HIS COALITION. THIS COULD COMPLICATE NEXT STEP IN REGIONALIZATION, APPOINTMENT OF REGIONAL
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MINISTERIAL COMMITTEES. HAVING CROSSED IMMEDIATE REGIONALIZATION

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HURDLE, TINDEMANS MUST NOW DEVOTE FULL ATTENTION TO BUDGET AND ANTI-INFLATION POLICY. HE AND MINECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND MIN FINANCE WILL PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS ON THESE TO PARLIAMENT OCTOBER 9. END SUMMARY.

2. ON OCTOBER 4 TINDEMANS DROPPED FRANCOPHONE MINCULTURE JEAN-PIERRE GRAFE OF PSC TO MAKE WAY FOR VAN AAL'S ENTRY. HE ALSO NAMED ONE LIBERAL, AUGUST DE WINTER, AND WALLOON RALLY LEADER, ROBERT MOREAU, AS SECSTATES FOR BRUSSELS AFFAIRS. THESE APPOINTMENTS REQUIRED BY REGIONALIZATION LAW BEFORE GOVERNMENT CAN PROCEED WITH SETTING UP REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND PREPARE REGIONAL BUDGETS AS SPECIFIED IN LAW. SWITCH OF VAN AAL (A BRUXELLOIS) FOR GRAFE (FROM LIEGE) WAS DICTATED BY TINDEMANS' POLITICAL IMPERATIVES: HE NEEDED ANOTHER BRUXELLOIS IN CABINET WITHOUT ADDING A NEW MINISTER. GRAFE WAS SACRIFICED. PRIOR TO MAKING RESHUFFLE, TINDEMANS MADE UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO INCREASE HIS NARROW PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY BY BRINGING IN SMALL BRUSSELS LIBERAL PARTY (PL). HE MAY ALSO HAVE ATTEMPTED MAJOR ENLARGEMENT BUT IF SO THIS WAS BLOCKED BY OPPOSITION VOLKSUNIE.

3. WITH EXCEPTION OF SOCIALIST PRESS MOST POLITICAL REPORTERS APPLAUDED TINDEMANS FOR CARRYING OUT ENLARGEMENT WITHOUT UPSETTING DELICATE REGIONAL-PARTY-LINGUISTIC BALANCE IN GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, ALL GENERALLY AGREE HE TOOK TOO MUCH TIME IN DOING THIS. THIS TIME SHOULD HAVE BEEN DEVOTED TO TACKLING NATIONWIDE PROBLEM OF INFLATION. TINDEMANS' GOVERNMENT STILL HAS ONLY 9 VOTE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, AND HE NO DOUBT WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE PRESSURE FORM FRANCOPHONE REGIONAL INTERESTS WITHIN THE COALITION. THIS COULD BE MANIFESTED IN FURTHER BICKERING OVER REGIONAL MINISTERIAL COMMITTEES. RESHUFFLING OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES ON OCTOBER 4 IS EXPECTED PAVE WAY FOR NAMING THESE COMMITTEES.

4. BEFORE DOING THIS, HOWEVER, TINDEMANS MUST PRESENT BUDGET AND ANTI-INFLATION POLICY TO PARLIAMENT FOR WHAT COULD BE HEATED DEBATE. HE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE AND MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS OLEFFE AND MINISTER OF FINANCE DECLERCQ (JUST BACK FROM WASHINGTON) WILL PRESENT THESE TO PARLIAMENT ON OCTOBER 9. DEBATE IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW ON SAME DAY AND SOCIALISTS, WHO HELD POLITICAL CONGRESS OCTOBER 5, WILL NO DOUBT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE READY TO ATTACK THESE PROPOSALS IN PUBLIC DEBATE.

5. COMMENT:WHILE TINDEMANS MAY NOT HAVE STRENGTHENED HIS POSITION IN RESHUFFLE, HE SEEMS TO HAVE LIMITED INTERNAL DAMAGE TO HIS GOVERNMENT TO A MINIMUM. ONLY REAL PROBLEM IS IN PSC WHERE GRAFE'S SUPPORTERS IN LIEGE COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS. HOWEVER TINDEMANS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO HAVE DIFFICULTIES WITH REGIONAL PARTIES OVER APPLICATION OF REGIONALIZATION LAW

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PARTICULARLY SINCE FIGHT ON INFLATION WILL IMPINGE ON BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THIS LAW. AT SAME TIME DISGRUNTLED REGIONAL ELEMENTS MIGHT COALESCE AROUND MAIN OPPOSITION NOW CENTERED IN SOCIALIST PARTY AND FLEMISH VOLKSUNIE. MAIN PROBLEM FOR TINDEMANS' GOVERMENT WILL BE TO OBTAIN PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL OF BUDGET AND BRING INFLATION UNDER CONTROL. FIRESTONE

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